


ST. GERMANS RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL.

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Medical Officer of Health's  
**ANNUAL REPORT**  
**1910.**

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*To the Chairman and Members*

OF THE

*St. Germans Rural District Council.*

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GENTLEMEN,

I lay before you my Annual Report for the year 1910, this being my Sixth Report as your Medical Officer of Health.

As this is the last report before working on the new census, and the last for the first complete 10 years of this century, it is as well to contrast our vital statistics and infectious disease returns for the several years of this period and see if we have in any directions improved our Sanitary position.

Up to and inclusive of 1903, Torpoint Urban District was part of St. Germans, and the figures and statistics were different then to what they have been since, so that I can only deal with certainty with the past 7 years, and those years I will confine myself to.

I would wish you to bear in mind that the population of the district, 15,034, is only estimated on the annual increase between 1890 and 1900. The possible error is, therefore, increasing during the last 10 years until it reaches its climax this past year, and the actual and estimated population may be different.

**BIRTH RATE.**

During this period of 7 years the number of births has been steadily decreasing, with the exception of 1908, when it increased a few above the previous year. The decrease has been from 295 to 240, or as a rate from 20·4 to 16·16. There are reasons for this; some we have no command over, others we have. Amongst the first we must

note the restriction in the size of families and the migration from country to town owing to the less need for labour on the land. Under the second heading, from enquiries and my observation I believe it is largely due to want of cottage and small house accommodation. Young men cannot marry unless they can get a home to live in; with young women the same; and that with us means leave the district. Sailors, who form a considerable proportion of our young population, could leave their wives among their own friends in the country if they could get houses, but now they leave for the more congested parts of the Three Towns. With a natural increase of 100 to 120 we should have increased building if we are to encourage a healthy country life.

### DEATH RATE.

If we cannot congratulate ourselves on our Birth Rate, we can on our Death Rate during this period. The number of deaths has regularly decreased year by year (with the exception of this past year, when that of the preceding year was slightly exceeded) from 183 to 136, or an annual rate of 12·7 to 9·04, and this has been a gradual decrease. The deaths this year were 11 more than last year, 136 in number, giving a rate of 9·04. Of these 52 were over 65 years of age, 16 under one year, 12 were due to phthisis, 4 to infectious disease, 1 murder, 1 suicide, and 1 found dead.

### INFANTILE MORTALITY.

The infantile deaths this year number 16 as compared with 15 last year. This heading shows a large but gradual decrease during the past 7 years, the decrease being from 36, on a rate of 122·4, to 16, giving a rate of 65·8. There were 3 illegitimate births, one of which infants died.

Taken as a whole the vital statistics for the year are highly satisfactory, and the comparison with the previous six years shows a gradual and very marked improvement especially in our Infantile Death-rate.

### INFECTIOUS DISEASE.

During this year 34 cases have been notified, as below:—

Diphtheria	...	...	7
Erysipelas	...	...	13
Scarlet Fever	...	...	10
Enteric ..	...	...	3

The cases were distributed

St. Germans	...	...	5
South District	...	...	8
North District	...	...	21

These cases represent the smallest number of cases notified for the last 7 years. The incidence of infective disease has gradually decreased with the death-rate. For comparison I give the notified Infectious cases during this period.

1904	..	102
1905	...	89
1906	...	52
1907	...	43
1908	...	45
1909	...	35
1910	...	34

The Diphtheria Cases were all in the North District; two in one house, and one in the adjoining house, where general cleanliness was absent. Two in one house where the sewerage is in a deplorable condition, and has been under the consideration of the Council on several occasions; two in another house not far off the last. The Council provide Bacterial



examination of swabs free of cost, but this mode of diagnosis is not made use of as I should wish, which is a pity. Out of the 7, only 3 were proved to be diphtheria by this method. The Council also supply Antitoxin for cure and prevention, so we may safely say that all possible is done to prevent this disease, and all possible methods are at the disposal of all. The Scarlet Fever cases were a continuance of last year, the very mildness of the cases being the cause of its long continuance with us, as, undoubtedly, causes of this disorder have been at large mixing with all and everybody.

Enteric is represented by 3 cases, quite independent of each other. No local cause could be assigned for these cases, but in one it is quite possible that the soiling of the permanent way with faecal matter from trains, and then soiling of the workmen's tools on the line, was the cause.

Erysipelas, of which we had 13 cases, scattered over the district, all in old persons of the poorer class, is mostly due to want of attention to wounds of the legs. Old persons with ulcerated legs have an idea that they must not allow them to heal for fear of inward mischief, and many and queer are the applications they apply, not always cleanly. With our District Nurses, improvement should be expected in this direction.

Puerperal Fever, a disease above all others which is preventable, as it must be due to absorption of an external poisoning, is represented by one case, followed by death. As this is one of those cases which we hope will become extinct, I will give an outline of it. A young woman confined, attended at the time by a woman who does this kind of work. The confinement was supposed to be premature. The child died and was the subject of an inquiry by the Coroner, not having been medically attended. The mother being very ill, Medical advice was called in, but she died in a few days. This occurred within two miles of several Medical men and one certified midwife. The woman attending her being a relative and not working for gain, is outside the Midwives' Act.

This brings me to consider the working of the Midwives' Act in our district.

We have five certificated midwives (District Nurses) all under supervision, and their work has been well done. Besides this, in the more populated part of St. Stephens the people are served by two nurses from Saltash, one certificated, one registered. Outside Torpoint they have the nurse from there. We have no registered women in the district.

These nurses are distributed

- 1, St. Mellion and District.
- 1, Botusfleming, including Landrake.
- 1, Crafhole.
- 1, St. Germans, including Downterry.
- 1, Millbrook and District.

If these Nurses are sufficient for the District, taking into consideration its size, is a question I have gone into. The Nurses themselves and the Associations supporting them say they are, as the later addition of the Nurse residing at Botusfleming is for the relief of that part and Landrake.

If we judge from the number of cases attended by them their work is not heavy.

During 1910, the St. Mellion Nurse has attended	...	6
" " " St. Germans " "	...	14
" " " Botusfleming " "	...	8
" " " Crafhole " "	...	5
" " " Millbrook " "	...	7

Of course, they have ordinary nursing to do in the same districts, and these cases do not include those in which a medical man is in attendance.

They work their district on bicycles, and live close to the Telegraph Offices, which is handy for day calls.

### PHTHISIS.

The number of cases due to this cause, though not more than the average usual number, calls for attention. We have this year 12 of these deaths. This is another disease which we should expect a diminution in, if only common sense and ordinary care was exercised. but the extraordinary repugnance to fresh air at night is long in dying out, and the knowledge that it is an infectious and preventable disease is hard to impress on our country people, who still look upon it as a family complaint, which once fixed on a person dooms them to a certain and early death. We do what we can by distributing literature to counteract this ignorance. We have no Sanatorium ourselves but subscribe for one bed at Didworthy, in Devon. The results of the treatment of our patients there has been particularly successful. We disinfect after death in those cases in which information reaches us in time.

No pauper phthisis has been notified this year.

Great improvements have been made in some of the Elementary Schools. At Tideford the Sanitary arrangements have been thoroughly renewed, and now that the water supply has been laid on, the Council's previous cause of complaint has been removed.

The Sanitary condition of Landrake Schools has also been remedied, while Botusfleming School has been practically rebuilt.

I have not ordered the closing of any Schools with a view to preventing spread of Infectious disease, but in the case of some measles and bad attendance due to sickness, which lowered the attendance to what was hardly to be worked with, I have left the closing to the advice of the School Medical Officer, for in this County Medical Inspection of children is carried out by a separate staff and not by Officers of the Public Health Department.

### SLAUGHTER HOUSES.

These have been inspected and found cleanly kept. Although I am satisfied with them it does not follow that I am with all the slaughtering which takes place in the District, as I pointed out in my report of 1906. This was exemplified this year when the carcase of a bull was forwarded to Plymouth and immediately seized by the Authorities and destroyed in their destructor. This formed the subject of an investigation by the Inspector of the Agricultural Board.

### DAIRIES.

These are regularly inspected and have been found satisfactory. More care in excluding flies from milk would insure it against possible infection from this source.

### FOOD.

No seizures of food have been made this year.

### INFECTIOUS HOSPITAL.

We are in the same position in this matter, the negotiations with the neighbouring Borough being for the present suspended. We still have our Small Pox Hospital of 4 beds, and maybe we shall want it, as vaccination is getting less and less owing to the ease in obtaining exemption orders, not always on account of a disbelief in vaccination, as the very persons who apply for the orders have in some cases assured me that if Small Pox were about they and their children would hurry to be done.

### NUISANCES.

Twenty-four have been dealt with by notices, and the notices complied with; some of these were for necessary protection of good water wells, the water being proved by analysis of good quality. Some orders remain outstanding but these are those cases in which there is



some legal trouble or where the question of some larger scheme for the necessary improvement is under consideration. The Factories and Workshops and Workplaces are inspected and no proceedings of any kind have been necessary under the Act.

The Town Planning Act has lead to a systematic inspection of, so far, 48 houses in Tideford, but the necessary orders to be issued will be considered by the Council at the first meeting in the year 1911.

### ST. GERMANS DISTRICT.

This District still stands out as the healthiest of the three and is nearly purely agricultural. We have had no deaths from any infectious disease and only one from Phthisis. No infectious disease has been notified in our little watering place, Downderry, nor in Hessenford. There were only 5 notified in this district. The condition of the Beaches at Downderry, which I complained of in my last Report, was much improved this summer, owing no doubt to the new notices and distribution of warning leaflets. The same improvement has been noted at Hessenford with regards to the river. The Receiving Tank at lower Devicock which supplies the higher reservoir for Downderry Water Supply, has been protected by arching it over, and a door hung in front in place of the old arrangement which was of doubtful protection against superficial contamination. The water supply is very scant here in the summer, and advantage might be taken of a spring, so the Sanitary Inspector informs me, which would supply the lower Reservoir. An old nuisance existing at Budes Shop has at last been remedied by the Earl of St. Germans and the Highway Authority carrying out a combined system of drainage. At Polbathic the market place is now regularly cleaned after each market, and the complaints have ceased. In this district the Council must well consider what can be done at Minard Cross, the inhabitants there being hard up for water; they have to go about 400 yards to a neighbouring farm to obtain it.

### THE SOUTH DISTRICT.

Here I would like to emphasize the fact that Millbrook, once a most unhealthy spot, and hardly ever free from Enteric Fever or Diphtheria, has become, since its improved sewerage, as healthy a village as we have in our District, three cases of Erysipelas and one of Enteric being the only notified cases in this place. It would still improve Millbrook if the filling up of the mud flat were proceeded with. It has been hanging fire for a long time now. What the difficulties in the way now are I don't know. The Water Supply here is deficient in summer. This might be greatly improved by making the clearwater reservoir tight, which it is far from being.

At Cawsand, the public convenience has been renovated and proper closets provided up to the present day sanitary requirements. I hope to see this completed by providing up-to-date urinals in place of the present one. Hundreds of people visit this place in the summer on day trips. The Outfall Sewer at Cawsand will require attention, as it is constructed by discharging an 18-in. pipe into a 12-in. No wonder we get chokage.

In Back Street, Kingsand, there is an old built sewer which should be replaced by a piped one. It is leaky, and I am informed rats burrow from it to the houses. Where rats can go there also sewer air does. A new Flushing Tank has been provided here, but the water supply is weak in summer. If the stream now running to waste could be utilised it would greatly benefit the community.

Antony has been supplied with water at a pressure that will reach the top of any house. Many have had it laid on, including the School. Others are supplied from standpipes. The water is obtained at 4d. per 1,000 gallons from Sir Reginald Pole-Carew.

### THE NORTH DISTRICT.

This is the District in which we may expect an increase in population, and, therefore, increase in Sanitary Works. At Tideford the water supply has been laid on to the Schools, and has been a great convenience to their improved Sanitary arrangements. Here, the old-standing

nuisance referred to in my last report as always existing, has at last been remedied, but the sewerage of Tideford will not be complete till the Council see their way clear to construct a short length of sewer for the west end of the village.

At Landrake the recommendations of the Sanitary Inspector were carried out at the Schools at the cost of about £100, and now we have there one of the newest approved arrangements in the District. In this Village a flush tank has been provided, and the nuisance of the overflow from the Cesspit has been abated by treating it by irrigation.

In the Parish of St. Stephens we have done away with the Cesspit at Pill, and carried the Sewer to the Sceptic Tanks. I should like to see better ventilation of our Sewers at Kimberley Terrace and Cross Park. The question of the Sewerage of St. Stephens Village is always before you. It is a serious matter and could easily be dealt with by a short sewer leading to a Cesspit in the field behind these houses. We have had two cases of Diphtheria in these houses, no doubt due to the deplorable state of their sewerage.

Antony Passage still suffers from having her only available water supply flooded through the soil by the waters of the Lynher, a salt water estuary. I can trace this complaint of a serious condition of affairs through my six reports, and through several of those of your late Medical Officer of Health.

In closing this report I must congratulate the Council on the amount of good Sanitary Improvements undertaken in the District during the past ten years, and can point to the improved condition of the general health statistics as justification for the expenditure of large amounts, and hope that this first year of the second period of ten years will be marked by dealing decidedly with the last two items in the body of my report.

Thanking the Rural District Council for the support they always afford their Sanitary Staff, which makes their duties the more pleasant and enables them to carry out necessary improvements without opposition, which would not be expected unless it was felt that their Council was behind them.

I remain,

Your faithful servant,

**R. T. MEADOWS, M.D., D.P.H.**